

WASHINGTON - Congressman Spencer Bachus today announced that steady progress has been made on construction for the proposed National Veteran's Cemetery in Montevallo.

"The construction of this cemetery is significant for Alabama's aging veteran population. I am pleased to see the Department of Veterans Affairs steadily moving forward on this project.

It is only fitting those in Alabama who have served our country with honor are afforded a final resting place near their loved ones," Bachus said.

Throughout the year, local property owners surrounding the American Village have cooperated with the Department of Veterans Affairs to facilitate access to their properties by an environmental assessment team. This process is scheduled to be complete next month. VA officials believe the Department will recommend purchasing several of the small properties pending the results of the assessment.

The land acquisition should be complete next year.

Construction will then commence with the cemetery scheduled to open in 2008 with enough acreage to accommodate burials for 40 to 50 years.

An environmental assessment of the proposed site is required to ensure that the land meets the soil type and topographical criteria necessary to support a large scale National Cemetery such as the one proposed at the American Village. The engineering firm of MACTEC, an Atlanta based company already under contract with the VA, is overseeing the assessment.

In 2003 the Department of Veteran's Affairs was directed by Congress to establish a new cemetery in the Birmingham area, which currently has a population of over 212,000 veterans who do not have practical access to a burial option in a National Cemetery.

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